

HEBREWS

"NO TURNING BACK"

Lesson 5

Ice Breaker: Have you ever had something you needed to do or take care of that you kept putting off? (A house repair, a health issue, etc.) What happened?

INTRO: The Hebrew writer reminds his readers that people who put off obeying God have always found themselves on the outside looking in. He makes the point that there is no better time to obey God than today! Procrastinating can be disastrous.

READ: Hebrews 3:7-19

***7** So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, **8** do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, **9** where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. **10** That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' **11** So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"*

***12** See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. **13** But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. **14** We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. **15** As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."*

***16** Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? **17** And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? **18** And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? **19** So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.*

The writer of Hebrews starts this passage with a quote from Ps. 95. In this Psalm, David recalls the story we find in Ex. 17:1-7.

READ: Ex. 17:1-7

***1** The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. **2** So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink."*

Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?"

***3** But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"*

***4** Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."*

***5** The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.*

6 I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

Q: The Israelites thought their problem was a lack of water, but was that really what their problem was?

- Their problem wasn't that they lacked water; it was that they lacked faith.
 - They didn't like where God had taken them and didn't trust Him to meet their needs.
- They argued and put off obediently following God until He proved He was with them by giving them what they wanted.
 - God had already given proof He was with them by providing them a pillar of cloud every day and a pillar of fire every night to lead them. (Ex 13:21)
- They were more concerned about God serving them than they were about them serving God!

Q: Why do you think the writer of Hebrews reminds his readers of David's psalm and the way their ancestors procrastinated in being obedient to God?

- Because the same thing can happen today... even to us!
- God always leads His people through a desert of some kind to train and develop them before they get to the Promised Land.
 - We have a cloud and fire to follow just like the Israelites did.
 - Our cloud is a cloud of witnesses who serve as examples: Heb. 12:1
 - Our fire is His Word acting like a burning lamp to light our way: Ps. 119:105
- When God takes us into situations that require faithful obedience, we find out which we are more interested in: serving God or having God serve us!

Q: The writer seems to be emphasizing the word "Today" in vs. 7, 13, & 15... he even capitalizes it. Why do you think he does this?

- From David's time to ours, there is no better time to listen to God and obey Him than right now!
 - When is the right time to obey God? When you hear His voice.
- Procrastination is rebellion! (vs. 16) It leads to destruction!

Q: According to verse 12 and 14, what happens when we rebel and stop obeying God?

- Vs. 12 says having a sinful, unbelieving heart will result in turning away from the living God.
 - If you turn away from God, you turn away from salvation.
- Vs. 14 says you share in Christ "IF" you hold firmly to the confidence you had at first.
 - The confidence you had when you first died to yourself and were baptized into Christ was all or nothing.

- You were fully committed at that moment; you would have done anything God wanted. You need to hold onto that same commitment.
- If you didn't have that commitment when you baptized, then you didn't die to yourself and you never had a share in Christ!

Q: Verse 13 tells us to encourage one another daily. Why do you think this needs to be done daily?

- This command comes between two verses that warn us not to fall away.
 - Sin is deceitful and it will harden your heart.
 - We need courage to turn to God rather than to sin!
 - It takes courage to follow God through a desert!
- Perhaps it is because everyone needs to feel some encouragement every day.

Q: According verses 16-18, lots of people started with Moses, but they never made it to the finish line. Can the same thing happen to us? Can we start off strong but fall away?

- 1Cor. 10:1-6 *"For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. **2 They were all baptized into Moses** in the cloud and in the sea. **3 They all ate the same spiritual food** **4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. **5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. **6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did."*******
 - The Israelites were baptized just like us, they ate and drank spiritually just like us, but they weren't focused on serving God... they wanted God to serve them. Paul said that was setting their hearts on evil things.
 - Arguing with God, procrastinating on being obedient, trying to get God to do what you want Him to do rather than letting Him call the shots.... these are some of the ways we can set our hearts on evil things as they did.
 - If we do what they did, we will get what they got!

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT: *Answer the following questions as best you can, then get with your discipler/discipleship group and discuss your answers.*

1. What do you know God wants you to do "today" but you have been putting off?
2. How seriously do you take the command to encourage one another daily?
 - a. Who do you try to encourage?
 - b. What do you try to encourage them to do?
 - c. Who do you let encourage you?
3. Which have you have been more focused on: serving God, or having Him serve you?